

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE TO

[First Reprint]

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR ASSEMBLY, Nos. 698, 703, 1389 and 1390

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 20, 1996

Assembly Committee Substitute for Assembly, Nos. 698, 703, 1389 and 1390 (1R) of 1996 establishes a Child Death and Critical Incident Review Board in, but not of, the Department of Human Services (DHS). The review board would investigate any situation involving children currently or formerly under the supervision of the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) who:

- C Are or were the subject of a critical incident, resulting in death;
- C Are or were the subject of a critical incident, not resulting in death but whose circumstances have been identified by the board as raising issues that could result in recommendations for policy, legislative or regulatory changes in departmental or divisional procedures; or
- C Have died and whose deaths were not due to an act of child abuse or neglect, but who died under circumstances that have been identified by the review board as raising issues which could result in recommendations for policy, legislative or regulatory changes in departmental or divisional procedures.

The review board would also be required to receive and investigate complaints about DYFS; examine ways to achieve better coordination and collaboration among State and local agencies to ensure maximum effectiveness in the prevention of the death and serious injury of children under the State's care; and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on the number of cases reviewed, a summary of the circumstances surrounding each case, the outcome of each internal review and the follow-up action taken by the review board concerning each case.

The Assembly Committee Substitute requires DYFS to provide the identity of persons alleged to have committed child abuse or neglect and victims of child abuse or neglect, their addresses, the nature of the allegations, the disposition of the cases and other relevant information to the police or law enforcement agency in whose jurisdiction the child named in the report resides. The police or law enforcement agency would be required to keep the information confidential. Finally, the bill, as amended, requires DYFS to make records of child abuse reports and their information available to the public under specified

conditions.

DHS and the Office of Management and Budget have not provided any fiscal information on the legislation.

The Office of Legislative Services is not able to estimate the cost of the Assembly Committee Substitute in the absence of information on costs associated with the various types of investigations the review board may have to undertake and the number of cases the review board may investigate. It is noted that under current procedures, every death of a child under DYFS' supervision is independently reviewed by the county prosecutor in which the death occurred and the county prosecutor's report might contain recommendations for policy, legislative or regulatory changes in DHS or DYFS procedures.

There should be no significant new costs associated with the Assembly Committee Substitute's provisions involving procedural changes to how child abuse or neglect cases and related information are handled.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.